CHILDREN'S MUSEUM NEWS

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART
FOUNDED BY EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

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ADORATION OF THE CHILD FILIPPINO LIPPI

GIFT OF EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

FILIPPINO LIPPI'S PAINTING

CAN you find Italy on your geography map? In that country men have been making beautiful pictures and sculptures, and fine buildings for thousands of years. If we were to go there today we would see many of these very old and precious things. However some of the pictures and statues have been taken to other countries. We even have some in Toledo. Would you like to know about one very beautiful Italian picture in the Toledo Museum of Art?

Let us look at this fine Adoration of the Child which was painted almost five hundred years ago. At that time there were many great artists in Italy. The painter of this picture was named Filippino Lippi. Filippino's father was named Filippo. Do you see how nearly alike the names are? Instead of calling the boy Philip junior as we would today, he was simply called the "little Filippo" or "Filippino."

The father, Filippo, had been an excellent artist who decorated churches and painted pictures for chapel altars. Many boys had come to him to learn to paint. Probably when Filippino was a young child he watched these boys doing their painting in his father's studio. Before long it was seen that Filippino could draw very well. However, he needed a good teacher like his father to show him better ways. But at twelve years old he became an orphan. So his father's partner took him to Florence to the studio of a great painter, Botticelli. This painter had been Filippo's best pupil. Surely he must have been glad to see his master's son again, and no doubt Filippino was glad to study with his father's friend.

The city of Florence was one of the most important in all Italy. Along its streets Filippino saw the barred doors and windows of the fortress-like palaces of the nobles, and the tall towers rising from

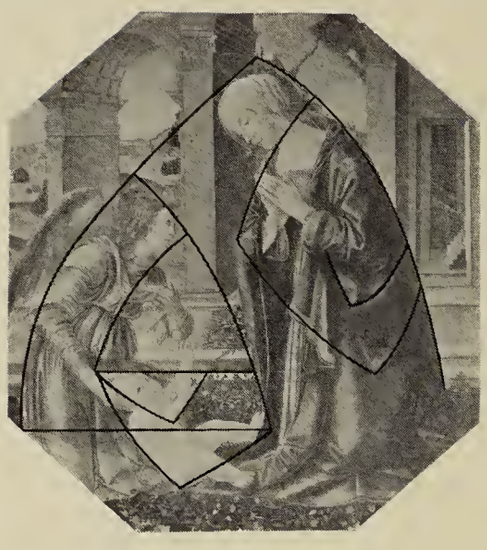
many of the buildings. Along the streets were people from distant countries taking their strange goods to trade in other cities in the north. There were thousands of Florentines—the people of the city of Florence. Many were very poor, and many were very rich. Some wore costly garments and rare jewels. Probably the young painter greatly admired the brilliant colors of these. Occasionally wealthy nobles ordered paintings from artists like Filippino. They chose to have portraits of the members of their families and old myths painted for their palaces, or Bible stories for their chapels. Filippino painted many of the Bible subjects. He used beautiful colors, carefully arranged to make fine designs. We will see this in his Adoration of the Child.

Of course Filippino had heard the story of the baby Jesus who was born in a stable near Bethlehem, but probably Filippino, like many other artists of that time, liked to think of Mary as the Queen of Heaven. In this picture she wears rich clothes decorated with gold patterns, and on her head is a thin veil, and above it a gold halo.

Filippino has placed the figures in a palace garden. The round arches, decorated ceiling, stairway and colored pavements were the kinds he saw in the palaces of the nobles of Florence.

The mother kneels as if adoring her child. How well Filippino has shown the love in her face! He may have remembered his own mother's face, or have watched mothers with their children on the streets. Her face and hands are very smoothly painted. Because the angel is a boy his face is more rugged even in color. And this baby is delicately modeled.

Probably while Filippino was in Botticelli's studio he learned that repeating lines, or shapes, or colors made pictures more harmonious, that is, more beautiful. Let us look for the repeats of lines.



See how many times the vertical lines have been used; next look for the horizontal ones. And then if you look closely you will find many diagonals. Do you know what kind of lines these are? Look at the illustrations to find out.

Let us look for another kind of line. The mother's back makes a long gentle curve. If this had been a sharp curve it would not have seemed as quiet and gentle, and even loving, as this does. Do you see how the artist shows us the kind of mother she is by the lines in her figure as well as by the expression on her face? Now see if you can find a gentle curve in the angel's figure. When you have found that one draw it on up to the mother's halo. This, with the line of her back, will make the top of a triangle, or a pointed arch like those used in ceilings and windows of old churches.

Now let us look at the shape of the halo above Mary's head. You will see this repeated many times in all three figures. However, sometimes it is larger, sometimes smaller.

When you come to the Museum to see the real picture in Gallery 23 you will see what lovely colors Filippino used. Mary's clothes are of red and dark blue-green. The angel's robes are of red-violet and yellow-green. In the pavement beyond the figures you will find more of the red-violet, while the hills and stream in the distance repeat the blues and greens.

Be sure you notice how well he has shown us the differences between the thin and heavy clothes, and between the soft flesh and the hard stone. Just such things as these which we have looked for show us what a fine painter Filippino Lippi really was. And after we have found these things we are able to enjoy his painting much more than ever before.